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# Written statement* submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[23 August 2018]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

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# Violence against the civilian population and aid workers on the rise in Central African Republic

Society for Threatened Peoples is deeply concerned about the rise in violence against civilians and staff of international aid agencies in Central African Republic (CAR). On a worldwide level, some 140 aid workers were killed in the year 2017, a 23 percent rise on 2016. The figures are revealing a worrying increase in attacks on aid agencies. CAR, South Sudan, Afghanistan and Syria accounted for two thirds of 158 major incidents targeting staff of aid agencies.

Armed violence against humanitarian workers has increased in CAR with 181 cases reported in 2018. This marks a 50 percent increase compared to the 120 incidents recorded during the same period in the year 2017. It means that nearly every day an attack against aid workers is registered. On August 1, 2018, an aid worker was murdered in Alindao in the south-west of the country. Some other five humanitarian workers were killed in the first seven months of the year in CAR. The number of attacks against humanitarian nearly has doubled in the last months.

Armed actors looted at least ten NGO-compounds in Bambari (Ouaka Prefecture) between mid-May and late July 2018 and caused a disruption of humanitarian aid missions. A series of criminal attacks against aid workers in Bria (Haute-Kotto Prefecture) in June and July 2018 have prompted several humanitarian organizations to delay or suspend much needed operations temporarily in the region. On July 5, armed men entered a Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF)-base in Bria, stealing medical equipment and causing MSF to disrupt their activities. Furthermore, staff of aid agencies has been threatened and assaulted and cash was stolen. Armed robberies are among the most common incidents, but it is difficult to distinguish criminality from militia violence since bandits sometimes pose as fighters and fighters sometimes act individually as bandits.

CAR has been gripped by militia violence since rebels ousted the former president in 2013, setting off a chain of reprisal attacks. Some 2.5 million people of the overall population of 4.5 million are requiring humanitarian assistance. Some 608,000 people are living as Internal Displaced People (IDP) in CAR, 573,428 people have been searching for protection in neighboring countries.

Our human rights organization is deeply worried about the influx of new weapons, which are fueling armed conflict. Deliveries of weapons from Russian Federation to the official security forces have pushed rebel groups to bolster their own stockpiles of weapons as they consolidate control over large parts of the country. The U.N. Security Council granted Russian Federation an exemption to the arms embargo in December 2017 to allow it to provide light arms to government forces and send military and civilian instructors to train them.

Despite Faustin-Archange Touadera's election as president in 2016 and the deployment of thousands of U.N. peacekeepers, most of the country is beyond control of the government. Unfortunately, the influence of non-state actors is increasing and jeopardizing all attempts to search for a political solution to the conflict. U.N. peacekeepers were unable to provide security especially in rural areas or to protect religious minorities and the civilian population. Thousands of Muslims have been trapped in churches or special protection areas and until today, they are unable to enjoy freedom of movement.

With deep concern we have noticed the killing of three Russian journalists on July 2018. There are indications that Alexander Rastorguev, Orhan Djemal and Kirill Radchenko became not victims of a robbery by bandits – as it has been claimed by CAR authorities – but were murdered by a pre-planned assassination. The journalists were investigating the activities of Russian mercenaries and illegal diamond exports. An independent and transparent investigation is necessary to clarify the background of their killing and to bring those responsible for the murder to justice.

Society for Threatened Peoples calls on the U.N. Human Rights Council to urge the Government of CAR:

- ensure more protection for aid workers,
- to strengthen access for aid agencies and the protection of the civilian population in rural areas,
- to guarantee the protection of religious minorities,
- to start an independent and transparent investigation in the murder of three Russian journalists.